

Module C – History & Memory

"It always begins in blackness, until the first light illuminates a hidden fragment of memory...."

Conceptual Approach



What have you discovered about humanity and life?

What are your thesis statements?

Rubric

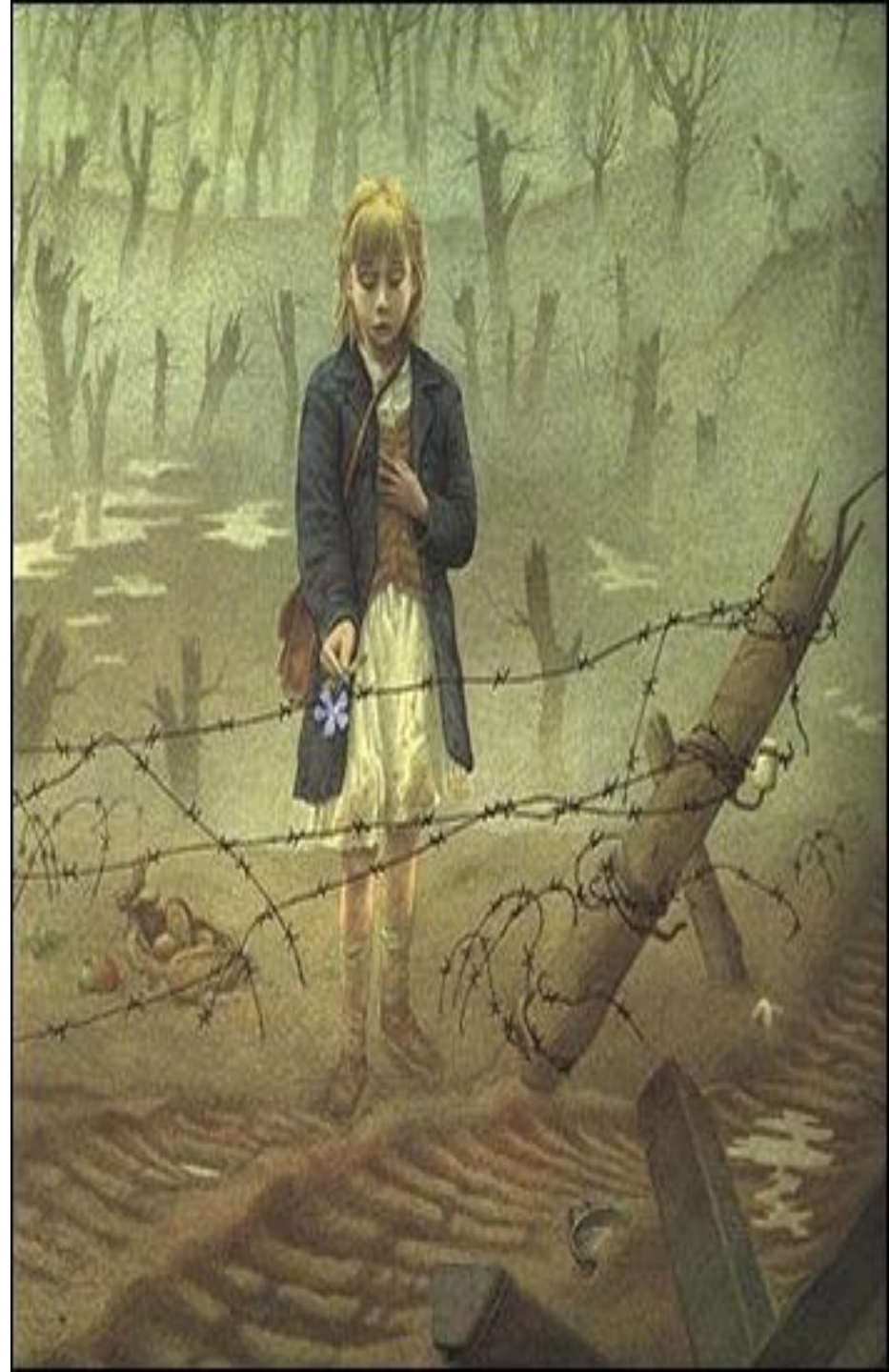
- Representations of **events**, **personalities** or **situations**.
- Evaluate **how medium of production**, textual form, **perspective** and choice of language influence meaning.
- Relationships between **representation** and **meaning**.





Rubric

- **Relationships** between individual memory and **documented** events.
- Analyse and evaluate the **interplay** of personal experience, memory and **documented** evidence
- How **history** and **personal history** are **shaped** and **represented**





Marking Guidelines

In your answer you will be assessed on how well you:

- demonstrate understanding of and evaluate the **relationship** between **representation** and **meaning**
- organise, develop and express **ideas** using language appropriate to audience, purpose and form

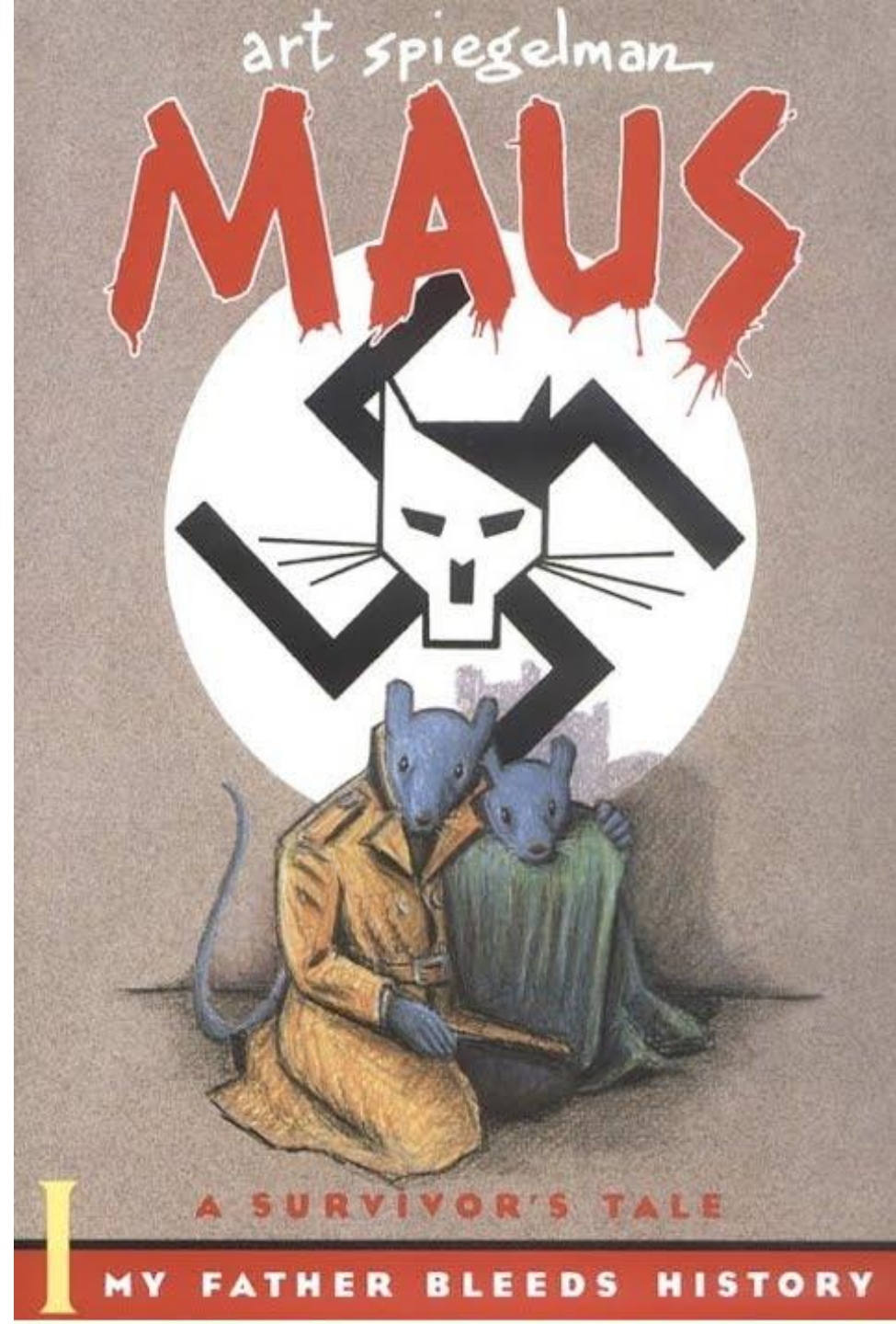
Feedback from Marking Centre

- Many stronger responses demonstrated an awareness of the **constructedness** of texts and how the choice of form and its associated language features connected with the composer's **purpose** and **context**.
- Skillful analysis and seamless **integration** of the prescribed text and well-chosen text
- **Judiciously** selected textual evidence
- In weaker responses, candidates superficially referred to aspects of history and memory.

How the interplay of history and memory of an event and/or situation are represented through the form, medium of production and language features. The representation reflects the experiences, purpose and perspective of a composer. History provides the documented evidence but memory adds the human dimension inviting empathy and understanding.

Representation

- The act – constructedness
- Purpose and intent
- Context
- Medium of production and form
- Language/filmic/visual /aural techniques
- Meaning conveyed



Key terms from the rubric

- **Medium of production:** How is this text made? Is it filmed, written, drawn? etc.
- **Textual form:** The text type of the work. Is it poetry? A novel? A short film? etc.
- **Perspective:** The point of view being offered on the subject by the composer
- **Choice of language:** Language (or filmic, etc.) techniques which help the composer to convey their message in this text.

History & Memory

- Documented evidence locates and validates the event or situation in History.
- Memory transports the human experiences of this event or situation to the present. Memory is the beating heart of History.
- Interplay: symbiotic relationship; intrinsically linked; symphony; reciprocity; nuanced interaction...



Medium of Production & Form

- The text is non-linear, in keeping with the approach of **Midrash**, which comes from the Hebrew Darash meaning 'to investigate' - an investigation of the Biblical text in order to discover relevance and meaning in the present context.
- Bricolage of polyphonous interviews, documents and creative reconstructions.
- Bildungsroman: Development as a son – movement to understanding.





- **Stones:** *'Where once stood flower beds, barbed wire fences... and a concrete temple that beckoned almost one million Jews, there is grass, there are trees, and there are stones. Boulders are scattered throughout the field, hundreds of them, human forms in stony relief, each bearing the name of a village or city whose residents once visited this location.'*
- Binaries of light and dark and tenebristic use of light and shadows
- The Gates



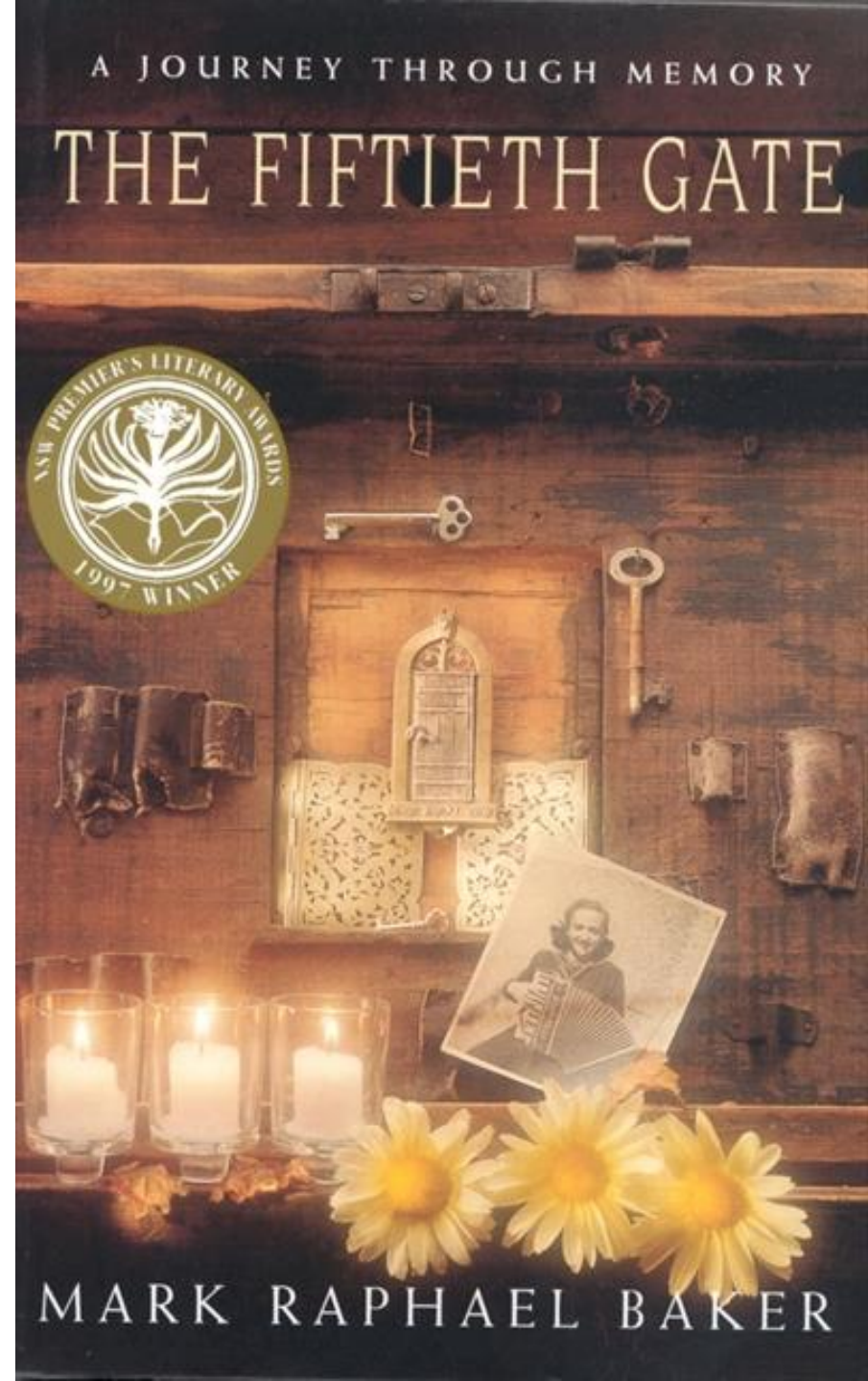
Imaginative Recreation

- *'What are these papers anyway except echoes of the past, dark shadows without screams, without smells, without fear.'*
- Hinda's final memories in a gas chamber.
- Evocative language and confronting gustatory imagery is used to describe the unbearable train trip to the death camp. *'The air is mixed with the pungent odour of fresh vomit and faeces.'*
- Ominous metaphor as the guards begin *'pushing the darkness of night into our vehicle'* to foreshadow the imminence of death
- paradox of *'deafening screams'*



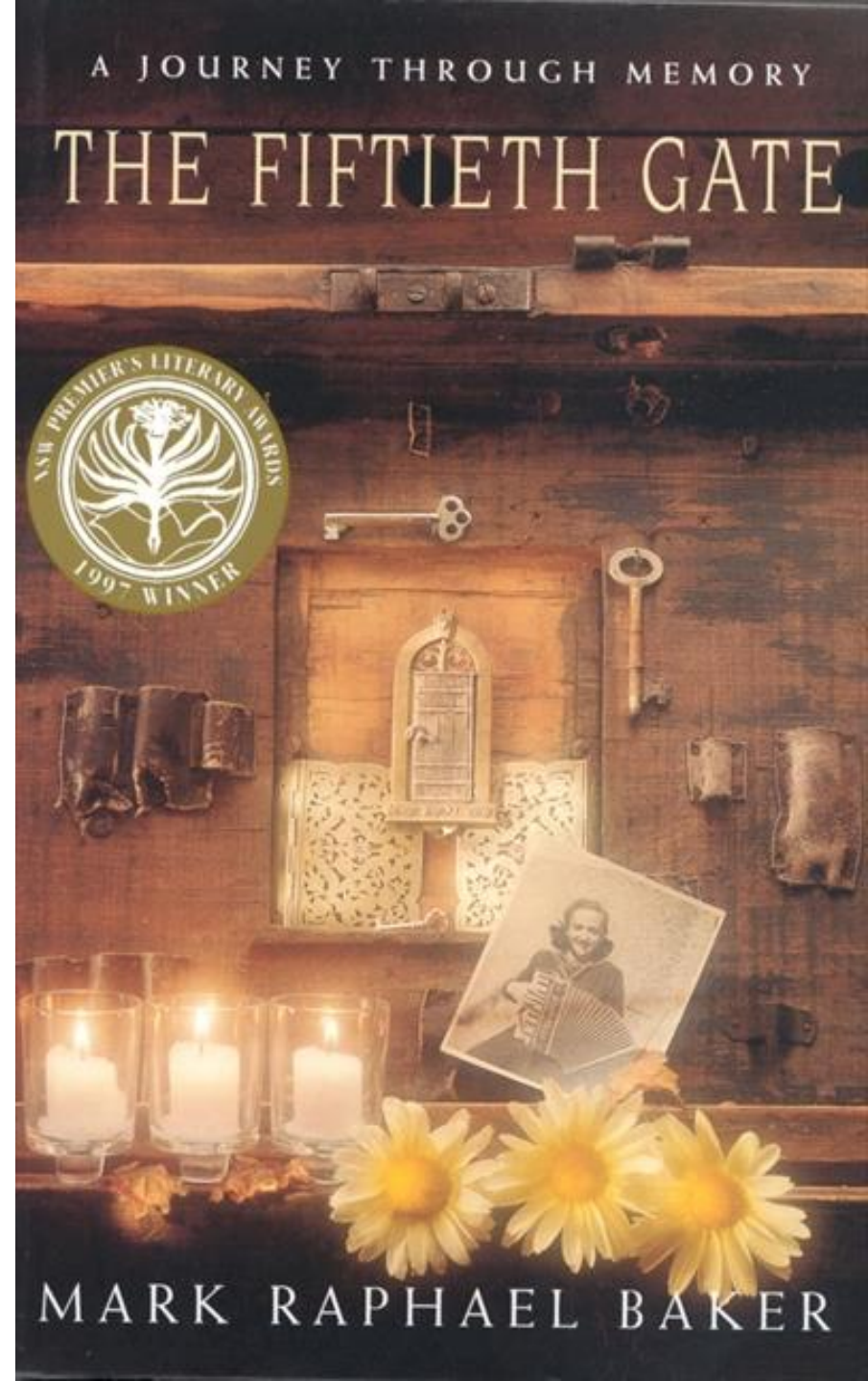
Purpose & Context

- *“Slowly, the book took on an entirely different shape: it became my journey into my childhood to try to understand what it meant to grow up in a household with so much sadness and tragedy. I mean, on the surface my parents laughed and loved; but there were all sorts of silences and coded signals which pointed to the terror of their own childhood” Baker.*
- *“I knew I had to take the same journey as my parents: to enter the darkness, so I could also come out laughing. I think of it as a candle flickering in a dim room. You only see the flame because there is darkness all around” Baker.*



Perspective

- Baker as an historian is sceptical of his mother's stories as they cannot be confirmed by historical records.
- *'Does history remember more than memory?...that I never believed her, that I only recognise suffering in numbers and lists and not in the laments and pleas of a human being, of a mother, screaming for acknowledgement?'*



History

- History according to Hutchenson is faction or His/tory. It must always be questioned and examined to uncover who recorded the history and in what context.
- *“Does history remember more than memory?...that I never believed her, that I only recognise suffering in numbers and lists and not in the laments and pleas of a human being, of a mother, screaming for acknowledgement?”*



History

- Unreliable and selective
- *“There is no single, eternal, and immutable ‘truth’ about past events and their meaning”* McPherson.
- George Orwell -1984: *“Who controls the past ... controls the future: who controls the present controls the past.”*
- Personal vs. Public History



Memory

- Our ability to store, retain, and recall information and experiences.
- Unreliable and selective; altered by experiences, such as trauma
- Process by which we make sense of our lives
- Cultural and personal history
- *'Stories are the lifeblood of a nation'* Garth Boomer.



Memory

- Vital to our understanding of the past.
- Most people derive their values, their sense of justice and sense of identity in this world, from memories of past events, situations and relationships with others.
- *“A body of beliefs and ideas about the past that help a public or society understand both its past, present, and by implication, its future” Bodnar.*



Memory

- *'It begins where it ends and ends where it begins: with my parents' stories, and my stories of their stories, and now, their stories of my stories.'*

'Come and see...

*The key is the forgotten heart,
the murdered prayer, the
death of memory.*

It opens the blessing or curse.

Come and see.



Memory

- *‘Dark, hiding in the cupboard it was all dark, while outside we could hear the footsteps, the shots, the screams.’*
- *‘Her story...her pain.’*
- P.89 - 94 – *‘Late at night they started to hit everybody, my sisters, me, they hit us all, but mainly they wanted my father.’* followed by the retelling of the history by Baker...’ Prisoner Number 5503 informs the SS official in the Records Office that he is Leib Bekiermaszyn.’



Memory

- P. 107 – *‘I just can’t disconnect my past, you know, I can’t forget those moments for as long as I live.’*
- Genia: P. 185 -194, p.214, p.243-250
- Yossel:p.224
- P.314 - *‘We came from crematoria flames...from bunkers and from the woods...So always remember it, and your children will remember it. They will survive, they will sing and dance.’*
- *“So always remember it, and your children will remember it. They will survive, they will sing and they will dance.”*
- *“Let their memory be bound up in the bond of life.”*



Genia - Situation

- *"[I]t was not the facts that were held under suspicion, but her credibility as a survivor. Unlike my father, she could never show her children the scars on her arm; hers were invisible, numbered in the days and years of her stolen childhood."*
- *"It was this uncontrollable urge, this repeated questioning of her, this interrogation, as if I was David Irving and not her son pointing the video camera at her."*
- *"Dark, hiding in the cupboard it was all dark, while outside we could hear the footsteps, the shots, the screams."*



Yossel - Event

- *"My father is on pages forty-two and 109 of a Register of Jewish Survivors published by the Jewish Agency of Palestine in 1945..."*
- *"For my father, the rivers have not thawed, until now, when the words break out from their glacial silence, releasing a torrent whose flow runs backward into his darkest nights.?"*



*‘History burnishes
particulars, brushes them
clear of individual
faces...everything
personal, individual, is
swept away in time’ Anne
Roiphe, The Legacy of
Memory.*

Symbiosis

- *“Even more corrosive is the desire to forget. History needs memories to avoid the risk of forgetting crimes that must not be forgotten, victims whose suffering cries less for vengeance than for narration” Einstein.*
- Creating a dialogue between memory and history connects the personal and social experience.
- History helps situate memory.
- Memory contributes to contextualising historical discourse.



Event

- The Holocaust was the murder by Nazi Germany of six million Jews.
- Between 1941 and 1945, the Nazis established six extermination camps in former Polish territory--Chelmno, Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka, Auschwitz-Birkenau and Majdanek.



Holocaust: Related Texts

- Picture Books: *Rose Blanche*, *Erika's Star*, *Star of Fear*, *Star of Hope*
- Films: *Jacob the Liar*, *Schindler's List*, *Pianist: A story of survival*, *The Reader*
- Web Sites: www.remember.org
- *All That I Am* – Anna Funda
- *The Street Sweeper* - Elliot Perlman
- *Night* – Eli Weisel
- *The Hare with Amber Eyes*
- *Fig Tree* – Arnold Zable
- *Maus*
- Music: <http://fcit.usf.edu/HOLOCAUST/resource/music.htm>
- Poetry: http://www.datasync.com/~davidg59/holo_art.html
- *The Book Thief* – Marcus Zuzak
- Chagall's 'White Crucifixion', Jan Komsky's paintings - <http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/holocaust/art.htm>





Unable to Work by David Olère

Chagall's 'White Crucifixion'



Jan Komsky's 'Round-up'



*We saw the spirit of the
Holocaust in Cambodia, in
Tamil, in Kashmir, at My Lai.
Wherever there is a refugee
camp, faces pressed against
the wires, the Holocaust is
there” (Anne Roiphe, ‘The
Legacy of Memory’).*

Situation

- *“It doesn’t need to be six million deaths for me to respond now. I’ve learned to break down the pain into a different kind of equation: one plus one plus one. It doesn’t matter if it’s Rwanda, or Bosnia, or even just a homeless child, a single starving refugee. It’s a question of redirecting the rage on behalf of others so it doesn’t fester inside. Being a child in war...” Baker.*
- A victim of war or persecution
- A child of survivors of a traumatic, tragic situation
- Incarceration
- Genocide



Related texts

- [Kim Phuc](#) – Vietnam
- Stolen generation: Archie Roach; Ruby Hunter/*Rabbit Proof Fence*
- *Hotel Rwanda, The Killing Fields, Apocalypse Now*
- Paintings: Picasso's 'Guernica', Dali's 'Premonition of Civil War'
- *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*
- War poetry: Bruce Dawe, Siegfried Sassoon...



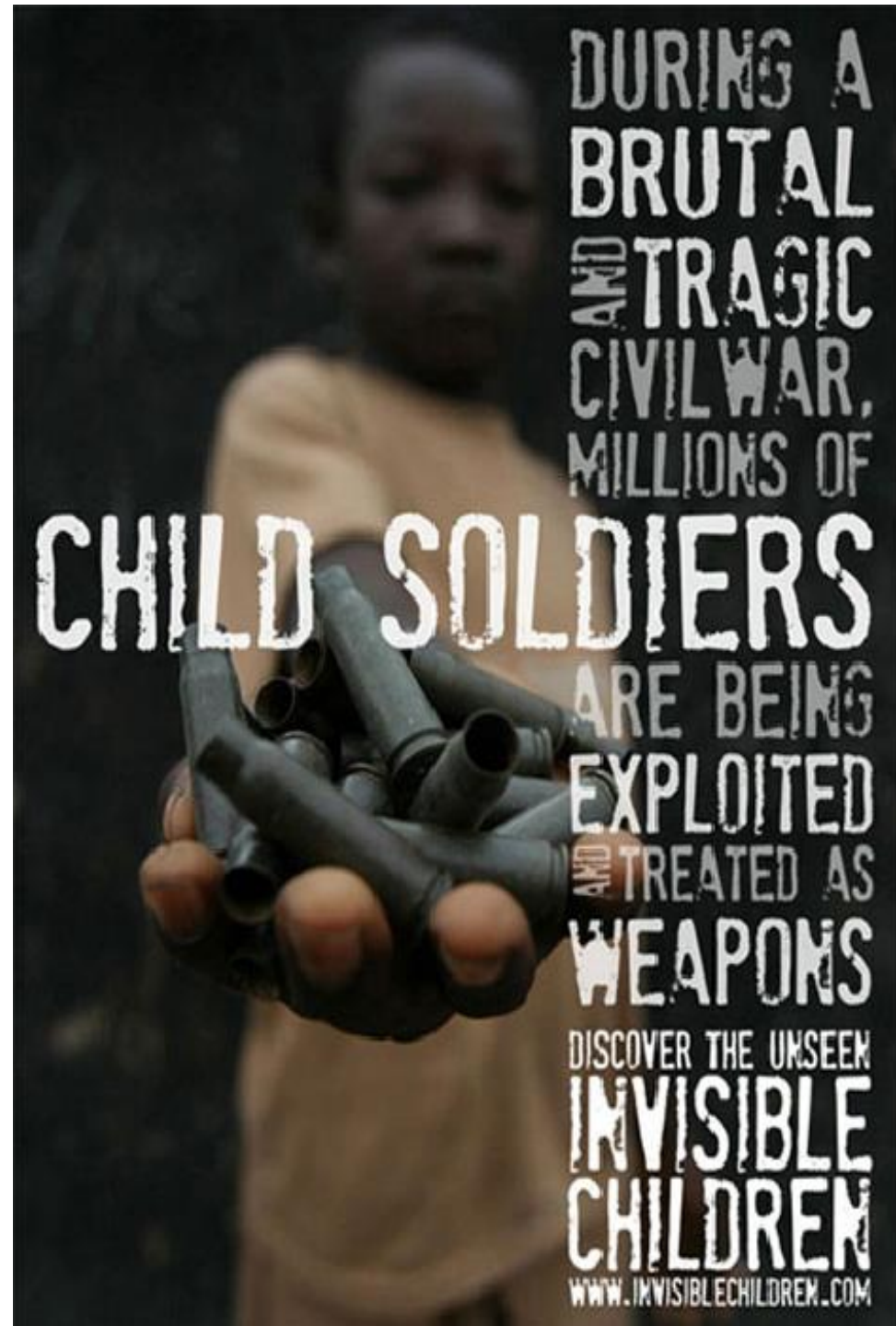
Related texts

- *Speak Memory* – Nabokov
- *Here is where we meet* - John Berger
- 'The Visage of War' and 'Soft Construction with Boiled Beans' - Salvador Dali
- *The Incredible Lightness of Being* - Kundera
- *From A to X* – John Berger

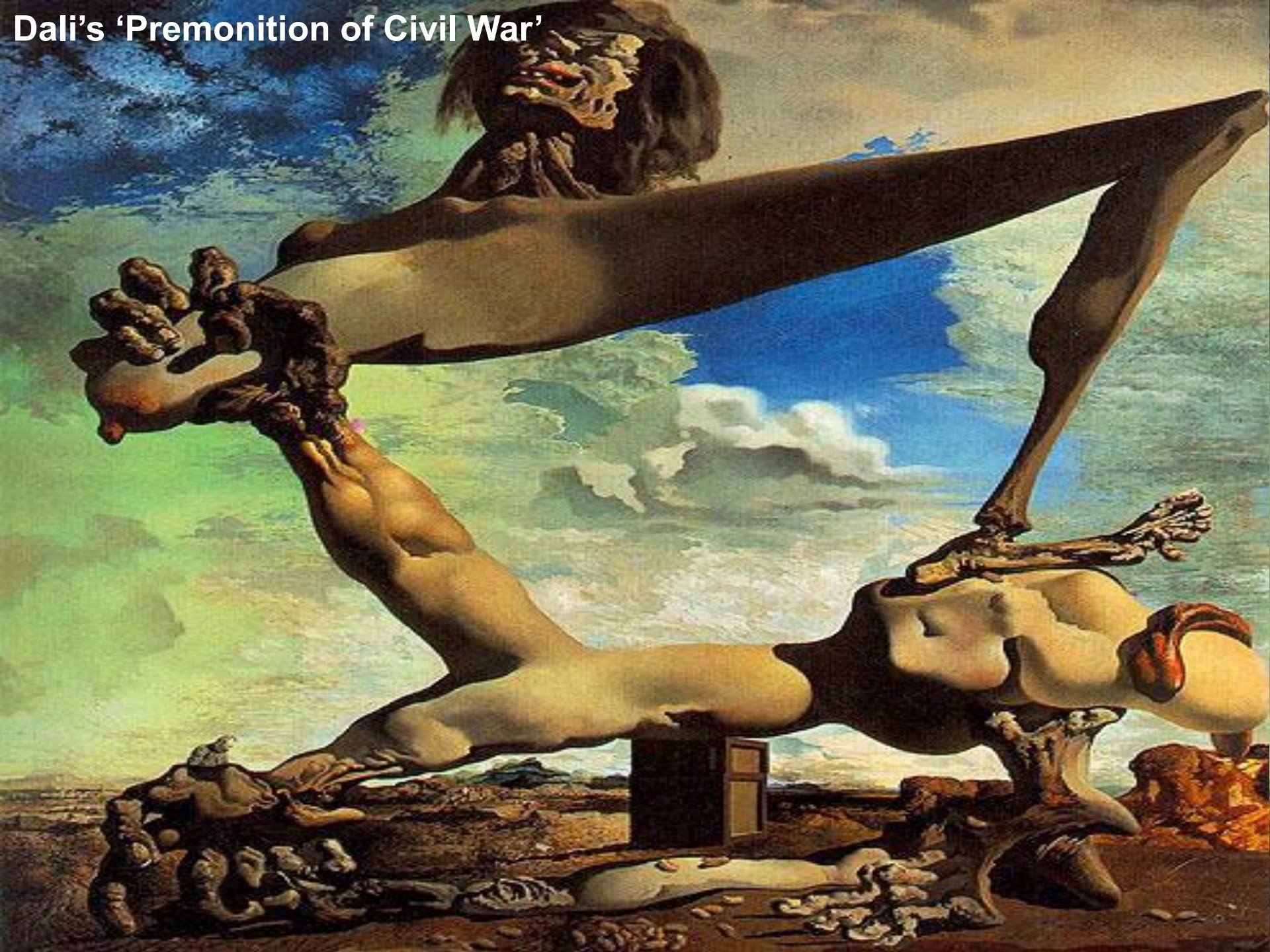


Related texts

- Film *War Witch*
- Songs: 'Only 19', 'Sunday Bloody Sunday'
- Amnesty International advertisement ['Child Soldiers'](#)
- Poem: 'Siem Reap, Cambodia' – Greg Santos
- 'Song of Napalm' by Bruce Weigl
- *The Cellist of Sarajevo* – Steven Galloway



Dali's 'Premonition of Civil War'



Ideas

- Loss of innocence
- Storied existence
- Post-traumatic stress disorder/Depression
- Flawed humanity
- Courage in the face of adversity
- Loyalty
- Loss of faith and hope
- Chance
- Resilience
- Hope



Response

- **Conceptual understanding:**
 - The thesis or line of argument
 - In response to the question
 - The framework and drivers for extended responses
 - Integrates the response
 - Support and challenge



Developing a Thesis

- Strong opening paragraphs that introduce clear lines of argument or theses that directly address the question.
- A response that is driven by a thesis connected to the question. Each successive point must further the thesis through textual analysis and support. Support or even challenge then thesis through the analysis of the text/s.
- Precise topic sentences that are connected to and build on the thesis.

Theses

- Overarching through the question to specific lines of arguments.
- Supporting the thesis with the reasons why the student has arrived at this point of view.
- At least two – three supporting arguments used to further the thesis that addresses the question in the essay.
- Representation – →
History/Memory interplay – →
event or situation → ideas



Suggested Approach

- Thesis related to an event and/or a situation that has been represented through the reciprocal relationship of History and Memory, and what this representation conveys about individual experiences in the past.
- Representation is shaped by the composer's perspective that is in turn influenced by experiences, context and purpose.
- Although history and memory are fallible, when they are layered together, the past is illuminated and transported to the present. Lived human experience resonates inviting understanding and even empathy.
- Use the event of the Holocaust and/or a situation to frame the response.
- Find memorable examples of memories in the texts of the event or the situation.
- Discuss how the form and the medium of production have determined the language features and shaped the representation.

Integration

- Making connections between the texts through:
 - Furthering or challenging
 - Act of representation
 - Event/Situation
 - History/Memory
- Connecting words: *Furthermore, moreover, alternatively...*

*In exploring the complexities between history and memory, it becomes evident that no matter how close we get to the historical truth of events, only memory can attempt to bring us closer to the reality of tragedies that confound representation. This idea is represented in Mark Baker's biographical memoir, *The Fiftieth Gate*, Roman Polanski's film, *The Pianist*, as well as Polanski's documentary on the making of the film, *A Story of Survival*. In these three texts, history creates a context and a foundation for the understanding of the Holocaust. However, history is not enough to convey the reality of the experience, therefore the composers turn to memory to provide their audiences with an emotional understanding.*

*Although history is perceived to be more credible than memory, in actuality, both the former and the latter act as an interdependent and interconnected continuum in which they aid in the verification of the credibility of particular situations. Both Mark Baker through his text *The Fiftieth Gate*, as well as John Pilger's documentary titled *Year Zero: The Silent Death of Cambodia*, through literary, audio and visual means of representation, exemplify not only the abhorrence of genocide, but also the concept that history and memory act in a symbiotic relationship, amplifying the stark and confronting reality of these situations.*

It is only through a combination of personal stories (memory) and public stories (history) that the realities of the past emerge. Memory provides the testimonies that History fails to offer, and this evokes emotion and empathy in the individual, creating a better understanding of the human experience. Mark Baker's memoir "The 50th Gate", Roman Polanski's documentary "The Pianist – the story of survival" and Tawnysha Lynch's poem "As The Orchestra Played" powerfully convey the idea that memory provides the testimonies which history fails to offer. This leads to a deeper understanding of past events, such as the tragic Holocaust, and empathy for those whose lives are represented.



Theses

- History can be seen as the documentation of the past, however, there will always be contrasting perspectives and interpretations of any one event. In order to truly understand the past, we must fuse our knowledge of documented evidence with the personal experiences and memories that fill the gaps left by history.
- Whilst history attempts to replicate the authentic, memory adds a sense of similitude and emotional gravity to a historical event. Through *Fiftieth Gate* as a lens, Baker explores the limitations of post-factum representations in the transcendence of the Holocaust experience, relying on memory as a way of bridging post-memory with reality.